

House Republican Press Release

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O'Neill Criticizes Release of Taxpayer Data



Southbury Legislator Supports Amendment to Protect Private Tax Return Information: Fails on Party Line Vote

HARTFORD- State Representative Arthur J. O'Neill today openly criticized Democratic legislators for attempting to obtain millions of individual and corporate tax returns for review by the legislature's Program Review and investigations Committee. It is the intent of committee Democrats to use the information to formulate tax policy. An amendment offered by House Minority Leader Robert M. Ward (R-North Branford) would have expanded today's special session to include the subject of the release of private taxpayer data to legislators and their staff. The amendment met with strident partisan opposition from legislative Democrats.

"This is really nothing short of outrageous," said Representative O'Neill, a former chairman of the Program Review and Investigations Committee. "It is a tremendous abuse of power, and invasion of privacy into the personal tax returns of Connecticut residents. Legislators and their staff will be reviewing private tax returns and all of the personal information contained in them, presumably to see if there is a way to squeeze more money out of individuals and businesses. I can see no good cause for legislators to review peoples' tax returns."

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal issued a legal opinion that indicated the committee was entitled to review the taxpayer information. In correspondence with Representative Ward, he issued a call for the law to be changed to protect the private information in special session. "I urge that this step protecting privacy - narrowing the scope of confidential information that can be obtained by the Committee - be taken immediately during the pending special session," wrote Attorney General Blumenthal.

"The state legislature is not equipped to handle the confidential nature and contents of personal taxpayer data," said O'Neill. "Allowing legislative committees and their staffers full access to the contents of those returns will greatly compromise the security of those contents, including taxpayer identification numbers and social security numbers."

The amendment to take up the issue in the special session failed on a vote of 56-77.